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The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Empowering young adolescents and their engagement on the post-2015 agenda

"More than ever before, the essential task of education seems to be to make sure that all people enjoy the freedom of thought, judgment, feeling and imagination to develop their talents and keep control of their lives as much as they can." Jaques Delors

The 59th Session on the Status of Women will conduct an overview of the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Platform for Action, in order to examine how we, as international communities, have reached or failed in accomplishing them.

Gender equality was stated as its main goal, ending with all types of discrimination against women. There were many ways mentioned to reduce such discrimination: reducing poverty, offering better opportunities for education, improving health services, reducing gender violence, promoting their humans rights, recognizing their right to work, to participate in the global economy and politics, among others.

Education should be considered one of the main aspects to be evaluated. Looking forward on the post-2015 agenda, 50 per cent of the world's population is youth and 51 per cent of it are young adolescent girls, meaning they are our core population. At the World Youth Conference celebrated this past May, the President of Sri Lanka welcomed the youth "to be part of a process that will ensure young people at the heart of decision making; to be part of a revolution towards making this the Golden Era for Youth Development", calling them drivers of change.

Education, recognized as a human right, is essential for the development of human capital, and more specifically, for the future of young generations. Education, as the most important tool for the development of any country, must be universal, equal, and of high standard. It is only through this manner that the quality of life, the access to job opportunities and the social environment may be improved. All of this in order to achieve the eradication of poverty and most of the major problems that concern the world today: violence, drug abuse, environmental damage, social and economic inequalities, HIV/AIDS, among other diseases; early pregnancies. As Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world".

It is well known that youth is the major human resource for development and they represent key agents for social chance, economic development and technological innovation; nevertheless, they are nowadays going through specific situations that diminish their possibilities of growth such as: the economic crisis; the increasing numbers of violent acts and harsh content in the media; high levels of unemployment; changes in the role of the family as a vehicle for shared responsibility and socialization of youth; inadequate opportunities for vocational education, and lack of quality education. Only through education can opportunities open for boys and girls, teenagers and young adults to have a better comprehension of the world in which they live.

Focusing specifically on young women, offering good educational opportunities can make a real change not just in developing a profession, but also in order to make thoughtful decisions in their lives, their families, their countries. If we are truly engaged in fighting against gender discrimination we have to start by offering the adolescent girls the opportunity to create themselves, not to tell them what should be the best for their lives, which cause to fight for, or how they should think about the world, their future or how they should run their lives and their families.

They will still need food supply, better access to health care, reduce risk of diseases, violence. But if we try just to solve all of these problems without educating or with a superficial education, our job would be partial, because they will never be able to be independent from us, adults, and from man. They will always have to expect and wait for the solutions to come from the outside. This dependence is their condemnation.

Several efforts have been made to improve education globally: for instance, "Education for All" was the motto of the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal, April 2000), where it was stressed that the right to education is not just the access to it, but an education to life which should also include the teaching of relational skills and abilities that enable young people to assume control of their lives, in the social context and contemporary world.

Regarding other aspects, the terminal efficiency in basic education puts into notice that while the improvement in the coverage has mostly been achieved, the same cannot be said about the quality and permanency. As an example of this, more than half of young people between 15 and 18 years old are out of school in Mexico. This means that from 98 per cent of boys and girls that finish elementary school and begin middle school, only 62 per cent will see their education finished. As a result of this, there are millions of teenagers without an education, drastically reducing their opportunities, and raising the psychosocial risks that will affect them and their environment. Male and female teenagers leave the classroom to go to work and balance their family's economy, throwing aside the option of a better future that would come about with the finishing of their studies. The Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean sustains that at least 11 to 12 years of formal education is required in order to avoid poverty and all social ills associated with it.

Another problem is that the indicators established for the evaluation measure quantitative amounts: number of students per country, number of permanence, average age, etc. but not qualitative results. The students are at school, but they have no light in classrooms, have not eaten breakfast, might have climate adversity, or can be too many for one professor, etc. So they might be sitting on a chair, hearing a professor but this does not say anything about real education, an impact on their lives. So we recommend that a scientific evaluation be established to measure the impact of the results shown on the different Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Platform for Action, so we can have a much more accurate notion of reality.

Empowering adolescent women will make us reach our goals: We have a recent example on Malala Yousafzai and she clearly resumes these ideas on her farewell speech to the United Nations General assembly "Dear brothers and sisters, we want schools and education for every child's bright future. We will continue our journey to our destination of peace and education. No one can stop us. We will

speak up for our rights and we will bring change to our voice. We believe in the power and the strength of our words. Our words can change the whole world because we are all together, united for the cause of education. And if we want to achieve our goal, then let us empower ourselves with the weapon of knowledge and let us shield ourselves with unity and togetherness."